



State of Connecticut

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Testimony Supporting SB 1098 and SB 1096, and Opposing SB 1102

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Education Committee, March 19th, 2015
Hartford, CT

Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and distinguished members of the Education Committee; my name is Orlando Rodriguez and I am an Associate Legislative Analyst with the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC). With direction from its board, LPRAC **supports** SB 1098 An Act Concerning Teacher Certification Requirements for Shortage Areas, Interstate Agreements for Teacher Certification Reciprocity, Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention and Cultural Competency Instruction and SB 1096 An Act Concerning Charter Schools, but **opposes** SB 1102 An Act Concerning Certification Requirements for Bilingual Educators.

Regarding Bilingual Education Teachers

Connecticut has among the worst education outcomes in the country for English Language Learners (ELLs).¹ There are many contributing factors including a shortage of nearly 300 teachers in bilingual education for PK-12.² We support efforts to increase the number of bilingual education teachers by increasing certification reciprocity with other states, and Puerto Rico. Furthermore, the proper use of certification is to place qualified teachers in the classroom and not to create excessive barriers for otherwise qualified candidates. It may be sufficient for Connecticut's bilingual certification requirements to be comparable with other states that are having greater success than Connecticut in ELL education outcomes.

In addition, we encourage the State Department of Education to recruit qualified teachers from other countries for languages with severe shortages.

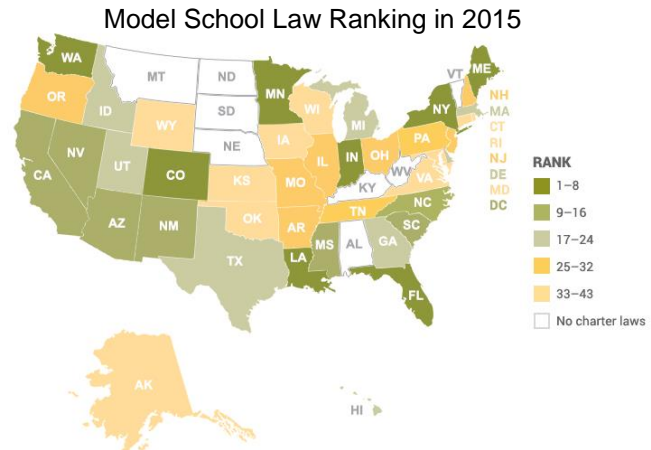
LPRAC opposes **SB 1102** because it reallocates unexpended bilingual education funds to the recruitment and training of bilingual educators. It is preferable to redistribute unexpended funds to districts with bilingual education programs. The recruitment and training of bilingual education teachers should be funded separately from bilingual education programs targeted at students.

¹ [Connecticut's Students Learning English Perform Poorly Compared To Nation](#)

² Connecticut State Dept. of Education, [PUBLIC SCHOOL HIRING TRENDS AND TEACHER SHORTAGE AREAS FOR 2014-15](#)

Regarding Charter Schools

The [National Alliance for Public Charter Schools](#) (NAPCS) has developed a “model state law” to evaluate charter schools nationwide on a variety of measures.³ In January 2015, Connecticut charter school laws received the 35th lowest ranking out of 43 states.⁴ In comparison, New York ranked 7th. Among the findings, “Connecticut’s [charter school] law contains ... *insufficient accountability*...”



Source: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

Separately, the [National Association of Charter School Authorizers](#) (NACSA) compares state charter schools based on, “... eight state policies that can facilitate the development of successful charter schools and enhance accountability for schools ...”⁵ Among twenty-one comparable states in 2014, Connecticut ranked lowest on a composite measure of these policies. Furthermore, the study reported, “Connecticut *lacks* all of NACSA’s recommended policy provisions for charter school and authorizer *accountability*.”

LPRAC believes there is a need for greater accountability from charter schools in Connecticut and supports SB 1096, and asks for more specifics on measures of accountability in the final version of this bill.

LPRAC is grateful to this committee for its ongoing focus on the needs of Latino children in Connecticut.

³ [NAPCS Model State Law](#)

⁴ [MEASURING UP TO THE MODEL: A RANKING OF STATE CHARTER SCHOOL LAWS](#)

⁵ [On the Road to Better Accountability: An Analysis of State Charter School Policies](#)